She had the cigarette between her lips, lit. I said no, get out right now. I picked her butt up off the floor where she'd thrown it down and hurled it into the doorway on my way out. The flaming cig.

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I heard shouting on the third floor. It was Michael. Usually so quiet and so small. Adam had warned me about his shouting. It was something I'd have to learn to put up with. It could be blood curdling. That was strong language for Adam, but not inaccurate. The shouts grew louder as he descended the dark-varnished stairs. I was on the second floor landing when he passed me, shouting and beating his ears so fast his fists were blurry. I followed him downstairs.

He halted in front of the reinforced glass door of the office. There was no one there. I was alone, and I was on his side of the glass. I knew what he wanted. He turned to me, cringing. His shiny hair accentuated his pallor. He had a good complexion, a handsome face, despite his thirst for soft drinks and his habit of slashing his cheeks with disposable razors. We thought the voices drove him to it, but his behavior was also manipulative. It was probably significant that he used disposable razors, because they weren't very strong and tended to make shallow cuts. He'd look terrible for a few days, but the cuts healed quickly and all but vanished in a week.